

great personal sacrifice and tremendous dedication, you secured our future. And while we sometimes take our way of life for granted, the veterans of the Korean War remind us that, as their Korean War Commemoration Flag proclaims, "Freedom is not free." Without the dedicated service and sacrifice of the soldiers we celebrate in this, the Year of the Korean Veteran, our nation would not be able to enjoy the freedom and prosperity that we too often take for granted. So, on behalf of later generations of veterans, like myself, and on behalf of all the citizens of South Dakota and all Americans, thank you for your lasting contribution to our nation's greatness. You, the veterans of the Korean War, are true American heroes, and we salute you.

Mr. SANTORUM. Mr. President I have a poem written by my constituent Dee M. Tramontina of Buck Hill Falls, PA.

I rise today so that I might call special attention to the thoughts and observations of my constituents who would like to accord proper recognition to those brave Americans who sacrificed, fought and died in the Korean conflict.

I would like to recognize both Dee M. Tramontina and Albert Tramontina, Jr., who, on behalf of the Monroe Chapter of the Korean War Veterans Association, have shared a poem with me concerning the conflict which ended 50 years ago.

I would like to call attention to this historic anniversary by asking that Dee's poem be printed in the RECORD.

THE "FORGOTTEN WAR" NO MORE

(By Dee Tramontina)

Some have made the grave mistake
Of calling Korea the forgotten war
But you can bet that none of them
Had to storm the Inchon shore
I am also very positive it's memory
Sadly stays with all of those
That at the Chosin Reservoir
They shivered, fought and froze
Perhaps you know of someone
Who fought among the ranks
And saw the awful, bloody terror
Of "Old Baldy" or the Yalu River banks
Be assured that a foggy memory
Would be a relief to maintain
For those that charged up the hill:
"Heartbreak Ridge" it seems, in vain
We can be sure that there are some
To this very day can still
Hear the horrors of the battle
We know as "Pork Chop Hill"
Definitely an everlasting imprint
Of the 38th parallel has been burned
Into the hearts and minds of families
Of the many heroes that never returned
We are coming up on fifty years
Since Panmunjom brought peace
In honor of those that fought there
May the memory never cease

VA POLICY

Mr. GRAHAM of Florida. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the attached article from the Gainesville Sun be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

[From the Gainesville Sun, July 19, 2003]

PERVERSE VA POLICY

There is something perverse about the Bush administration's push to cut medical services for veterans at a time when America is fighting a war in Iraq with the help of tens of thousands of reservists and guard members.

Most of those citizen soldiers will come home to once again take up their non-military lives and careers. And those who do develop service-related illnesses and injuries (anybody remember Gulf War Syndrome?) will invariably turn to a Veterans Administration medical facility for care.

In the North Florida-South Georgia region alone, about 5,600 reservists have been called to service for the current conflict. When they come home, some may require the care available at the Lake City VA Medical Center. But even if none do, that medical center already treats about 36,000 area veterans.

And yet, a VA reassessment group—perversely called the Capital Asset Realignment for Enhanced Services, or CARES—has called for services to be eliminated or scaled back at the Lake City VA and 19 other veterans facilities around the nation.

In response to a directive from Washington, local VA officials have, albeit reluctantly, submitted recommendations that would involve turning the Lake City medical center into an outpatient clinic, transferring 230 nursing home patients to private facilities—assuming adequate facilities can even be found in the largely rural region—and/or transferring patients to Gainesville's VA.

The objective would be to save perhaps \$6 million a year by eliminating jobs and operational costs at the Lake City VA center. That seems like a false economy in light of the thousands of veterans who depend on the center for care.

Fred Malphurs, director of the North Florida-South Georgia Veterans Health System, was clearly not enthusiastic about complying with the directive to identify cuts. "The benefits would be, in my opinion, marginal at best," he told The Sun last week.

Whatever the perceived "benefits" of closing down or drastically cutting back on Lake City's services, the impact on area veterans would be negative to the extreme. It also seems a bitter pill for veterans to have to swallow at a time when thousands of area reservists and regular military personnel (read future veterans) are still risking their lives and their health fighting a war half a world away.

Nationally, the VA does have a problem with underutilized facilities. We just have a difficult time believing that Lake City's VA center is one of them.

Florida is a magnet for retirees, many of them veterans of past conflicts. We would think that if anything, the demand for veterans medical services is rising, not falling, in the Sunshine State.

As North Florida becomes a more desirable destination for retiree vets, demand for care at the Lake City VA center is only going to grow.

SALUTE TO THE 109TH ENGINEERING BATTALION

Mr. DASCHLE. Mr. President, today South Dakotans will welcome home the 109th Engineering Battalion of the South Dakota National Guard. This unit, headquartered in Sturgis, was among more than 20 Guard and Reserve

units from my State called to active duty in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. On March 23, it became the first South Dakota unit to enter Iraq, and was the only South Dakota unit to operate in Iraq during the early days of combat.

Today, these soldiers and their achievements become a part of South Dakota's military heritage. Like those who served in the two world wars, in Korea, in Vietnam, and in numerous other places, this new generation has answered the call. They have offered to make every sacrifice, including life itself, to protect our freedom and security. We must never forget them or the honor with which they served.

The 109th Engineering Battalion is a headquarters battalion of 39 members, responsible for the management of several other units in carrying out engineering missions. The 109th was a critical part of our Nation's efforts in Iraq, completing a wide variety of missions, from force protection, to mine clearing, to construction of the Cedar II Logistical Support Area. The unit managed the activities of the 68th Engineering Company, the 95th Firefighters, the 520th Firefighters, and the 562nd Firefighters.

After being stationed in Kuwait during the month leading up to the conflict, the 109th moved to Tallil Air Base in southeastern Iraq, just outside of al Nasiriyah, where some of the war's most fierce fighting occurred. When the members of the 109th arrived at their destination, Logistical Support Area Adder on Tallil Air Base, they found an encampment that was quickly filling up with soldiers from the Army, Air Force, Marines, and from the British military. Force protection would be essential to guaranteeing these troops a swift victory over the stiffening opposition in the region.

At LSA Adder, the 109th oversaw the preparation of the battlefield for combat, preparing fighting positions, constructing guard towers, building a 3-mile protection berm around the perimeter, establishing supply routes, and building two Patriot Missile launch sites. In addition, the 109th managed the establishment of critical life support structures for the camp, including a water well, nuclear-biological-chemical (NBC) decontamination sites, a major Convoy Support Center, latrines, showers, and roadways.

I am proud to welcome home the members of the 109th Battalion and to commend them on a job well done. All of us know about the tremendous courage and commitment of the infantry soldiers and others who engage the enemy directly. But often we don't recognize the vital efforts of those units behind the scenes—units like the 109th that prepare the battlefield, provide medical care, establish life support services, and transport supplies. Their work ensures the success of our front-line troops and helps to hold casualties to a minimum. In 3 short weeks of fighting, the United States military